



**State of Illinois**  
Pat Quinn, Governor

**Illinois Department of Transportation**  
Gary Hannig, Secretary

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**CONTACTS:**  
Marisa Kollias 312/814.4693  
Paris Ervin 217/558.0517  
Scott Compton (ISP) 217/782.6637

## **Operation Teen Safe Driving Program Geared Towards Saving Lives on Illinois Roadways Gets Ready for Third Year**

*Groundbreaking program contributed to steep drop in teen road fatalities during initial campaign*

**SPRINGFIELD** – Illinois Department of Transportation officials were joined today by representatives from the Secretary of State, the Illinois State Police and corporate sponsors to kick off the third year of *Operation Teen Safe Driving*. The groundbreaking effort was designed to reduce teen crashes and save lives on Illinois' roadways.

*Operation Teen Safe Driving* is a statewide initiative spearheaded by the Illinois Department of Transportation's (IDOT) Division of Traffic Safety. The program is augmented by crucial sponsorships from the Ford Motor Company Fund and The Allstate Foundation and enlists young people to teach safe driving skills to their peers. This program has helped Illinois achieve a dramatic 10 percent reduction in teen road fatalities in the first seven months of 2009; teen fatalities dropped from 50 in the first seven months of 2008, to 45 during the same time period this year.

"We are very happy to work side by side with students statewide to help continue to reduce teen road fatalities," said Illinois Transportation Secretary Gary Hannig. "We want the students who participate this year to take the program seriously, get creative and realize the power they have to help save a life."

*Operation Teen Safe Driving* engages high school students in a competition to design community-based driver safety programs targeted at other teens.



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“I am pleased and encouraged that the number of teen fatal crashes continues to drop since my Teen Driver Safety Task Force issued recommendations that led to the strengthening of Illinois’ graduated driver licensing (GDL) program,” said Secretary White. “During the first full year of the strengthened GDL program in 2008, teen fatalities dropped by 40 percent. In the first seven months in 2009 the number of teen driving deaths dropped by 10 percent when compared to the same time frame in 2008. This statewide program will continue to draw even more attention to the issue of teen driving and to the new law by utilizing the creativity of teens to develop effective safe driving messages for their peers.”

A total of 97 high schools participated in the program during the 2008-2009 school year. Among the innovative ideas proposed by students were: holding safe driving poster contests, erecting billboards in locations that have high levels of teen traffic, awarding prizes for safe driving, and holding a demonstration in which students try to drive an obstacle course in a golf cart while text messaging. Students also came up with slogans like: “Could you live without me?”, “Don’t Crack up, Buckle Up” and “Don’t be a buried treasure, hook on for life.”

*Operation Teen Safe Driving* was modeled on the nationally recognized Ford Motor Company Fund’s *Driving Skills for Life* high school-based pilot project implemented in 2006 by the Ford Motor Company Fund, the Governors Highway Safety Association, IDOT, the Illinois State Police and local partners. This effort halted an epidemic of 15 teen fatalities in Tazewell County in 2005 and 2006.

“The Ford Motor Company Fund is pleased to enter into our third year of commitment to this life-saving teen safe driving program,” said Jim Vella, President of Ford Fund and Community Services, Ford Motor Company. “Vehicle crashes are the number one killer of teens in America, and Operation Teen Safe Driving continues our ongoing commitment to safety.”

Ford Motor Company Fund and Community Services is committed to creating opportunities that promote corporate citizenship, philanthropy, volunteerism and cultural diversity for those who live in the communities where Ford operates. Celebrating its 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2009 and made possible by funding from Ford Motor Company, Ford Motor Company Fund supports initiatives and institutions that foster innovative education, auto-related safety and American heritage and legacy. National programs include Ford Partnership for Advanced Studies, which provides high school students with academically rigorous 21st century learning experiences, and Ford Motor Company Fund’s *Driving Skills for Life*, a teen-focused auto safety initiative.

“The Allstate Foundation is proud join forces again with IDOT and The Ford Fund for the third year of Operation Teen Safe Driving, a program that has helped to save the lives of so many teens here in Illinois. Our goal is to ensure that we have an even greater impact this year,” said Linda Moynihan, Regional Sales Leader, Allstate Insurance Company.

Other state agencies involved in *Operation Teen Safe Driving* include the Illinois State Police (ISP), the Illinois State Board of Education and the Illinois Liquor Control Commission. Also



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backing the Illinois campaign are national traffic safety groups, including: the Governors Highway Safety Association and RADD (“the Entertainment Industry’s Voice for Road Safety”).

“The Illinois State Police understands the challenges teenagers face as they begin driving,” said ISP Director Jonathon E. Monken. “The Operation Teen Safe Driving program is an excellent medium for young drivers to use their creativity and innovation to reduce the number of teen motor vehicle crashes and fatalities.”

One of the leading issues in teen driver safety is underage drinking. The Illinois Liquor Control Commission (ILCC) educates teens, parents and educators about the consequences of teen drinking through its *Don't Be Sorry* public education campaign to reduce underage drinking. The ILCC offers their resources to the students and schools as they develop their local safe-driving programs.

Public and private high schools around the state are encouraged to identify the major teen traffic safety problems in their communities, and to propose creative solutions to those problems. High schools that come up with the most creative solutions will be invited to participate in the Ford Motor Company Fund’s Driving Skills for Life “Ride and Drive” safe-driving clinics at the end of the school year. These “Ride and Drive” events feature professional drivers giving young drivers rigorous behind the wheel driving exercises, including: hazard recognition/accident avoidance, vehicle handling/skid control and speed/space management.

For more information about *Operation Teen Safe Driving* and applications to participate in the effort, go to [www.teensafedrivingillinois.org](http://www.teensafedrivingillinois.org).

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